NATIONALIZATION, SECTIONAL INSURGENCY, AND VOLATILITY
CANADA AS A CRITICAL CASE

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Abstract: The Canadian party system was historically the most fractionalized among all SMD systems except India. The case is commonly presented as a prime example of local Duvergerian bipartisan equilibration combined with failure in coordination across locales, where the latter reflects the diminished importance of the national policy agenda relative to province-specific ones. I show that a significant fraction of the fractionalization occurs at the local level precisely as the three parties that are rivals for government run candidates everywhere and seek to nationalize their votes. If the paper solves some puzzles, it points to yet others. The paper is intended to convey the essence of a manuscript in progress, an analytical history of the system.

Keywords: Duverger's Law; fractionalization; nationalization; party competition.

Introduction

In the currently dominant theory of electoral coordination in systems with single-member districts and the plurality formula (Cox 1997), the chief indicator for the nationalization of electoral forces is indirect: the fractionalization of the vote. The pressure toward bipartism within districts is deemed to be so strong that electorate-wide multipartism must be the result of failure in cross-district coordination. Canada is commonly treated as the case in point. Rae (1969) noted that Canada's multipartism was the result of its sectionalized politics. Riker (1976, 1982) reaffirmed the argument, Cox (1997) put it on an analytic foundation, and Chhibber and Kollman (2004) fleshed out the argument for Canadian exceptionalism. Canada, they say, is the one country where the growing hegemony of the national policy agenda over local ones (Cox 1987) was reversed. As the importance of the national government relative to provincial ones shrinks, the imperative to coordinate across districts weakens. Within districts, however, the imperative is as strong as ever.

The argument is no more than half true, a triumph of theory over facts. Most of this paper is given over to description, the presentation of awkward facts. The cumulation of facts points toward a unified alternative reading, some elements of which are Canadian instantiations of universal patterns and some, *sui generis*. The universal pattern is well known in the rest of comparative politics: the emergence of class politics. Its universality is in direction, not in the ultimate distance covered. Here Canada is a laggard. The concluding sections link the Canadian pattern to this other cross-national story. All major threads in the narrative point to the importance of strategic information originating well outside the boundaries of local districts.

The Parties

Although most of the paper works with abstract index numbers, a brief introduction to the players and the stakes is necessary to motivate the argument. I divide the parties into two generic classes, "old" and "new." Although for many purposes this is a misclassification, for a paper about multipartism, a central tension is between the original parties and the invaders on the flanks. The old parties are the Liberals and Conservatives, which populate the left panel of Figure 1.[1] These two parties predate the creation of the federation, and to this day only these parties have ever formed the government. The CCF-NDP refers to a single party, which changed its name, from the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) to the New Democratic Party (NDP) in 1961. The change of name signals the party's maturation as a party of labour. I distinguish it from all other

[1] The starting point is 1878, the first election with the secret ballot. In the 19th century and early in the 20th candidates recognizably in an affinity contested elections under subtly different labels. Also, parties occasionally modified their label from election to election with little break in organizational continuity. "Conservative" includes Conservatives (1867-1940, 2004-15), Liberal Conservatives (1867-1911), Unionist (1917), National Government (1940-5), and Progressive Conservatives (1945-2000). "Liberals" include Liberals (1867-2015) and Opposition (1917),. The CCF-NDP includes miscellaneous Socialist, Social Democratic, and Labour micro-parties before 1935, the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (1935-1958) and the New Democratic Party (1962-2011).

new parties, which I label collectively as "insurgents." The label is arbitrary and used for convenience. Many of these parties are "anti-system" in the enlarged sense proposed by Capoccia (2002). Most are "niche" parties (Meguid 2005) in that they contest only one dimension of the larger policy space. I use "insurgent" simply to flag that their initial appearance is typically sudden and that most fade away. The most important of these are: the Progressives, a mainly western and agrarian group that flourished briefly in the 1920s; Social Credit, a party that began as a monetary reform entity but that morphed into a party of regional defence with a conservative cast and with two quite separate manifestations, one in the West (1935-68) and one in Quebec (1962-1980); the Bloc Populaire, a Quebec-focussed ethnoregional grouping that emerged in 1945 and then disappeared;

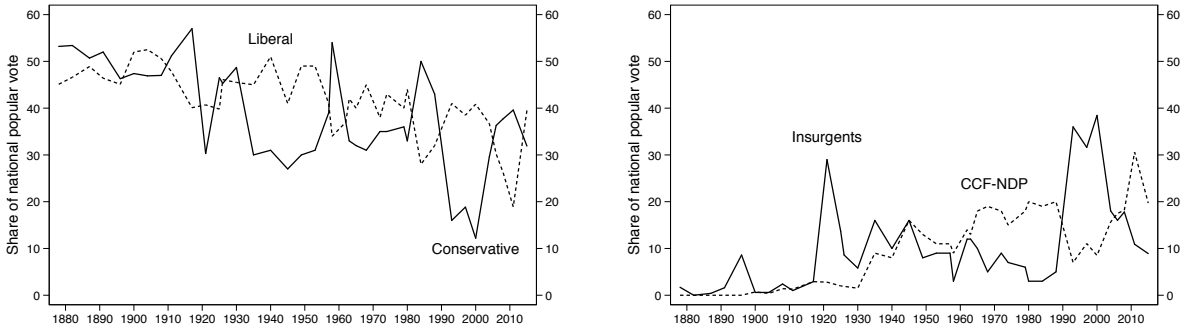

FIGURE 1 The Parties

Reform (later Alliance), 1988-2003, a conservative and mainly western party; and the Bloc Québécois, 1993-present, an ethnonational party officially committed to secession by Quebec. By pooling the insurgent vote, Figure 1 masks the group's volatility.

The figure shows that old parties have yielded vote share to the new ones, but on two distinct dynamics. The decline of the Liberal party has been mainly gradual, at least until 2011. The Conservative vote has been marked by severe volatility, with a series half again as volatile as the Liberal one.[2] A complementary asymmetry is visible among the new parties. The CCF-NDP is the complement of the Liberals in that the party's growth has mainly gradual, subject to only modest reverses (with the major exceptions of the 1990s and 2015). The insurgent share shows no real trend and features extended periods of decline. And the share is something of a fiction; it is the composite of an even more fissiparous set of sub-series.

[2] Specifically, the standard deviation of the Conservative series is 11.0 points where that for the Liberals is 7.4.

Fractionalization I: the Anglosphere

Figure 1 is a picture of fractionalization, which makes it the classic deviant case for Duverger's Law. Figure 2 scales Canada's fragmentation to that in the main SMD comparators, with plots of the "effective number of parties," or ENP (Laakso and Taagepera 1979). Australia may seem like an inappropriate comparator, as it uses a majority formula, but it serves to reinforce the main point about Canada. Where FPP makes no concessions to coordination failure and thus is said to force voters to consolidate into two camps, the majority formula is more accommodating in that it allows

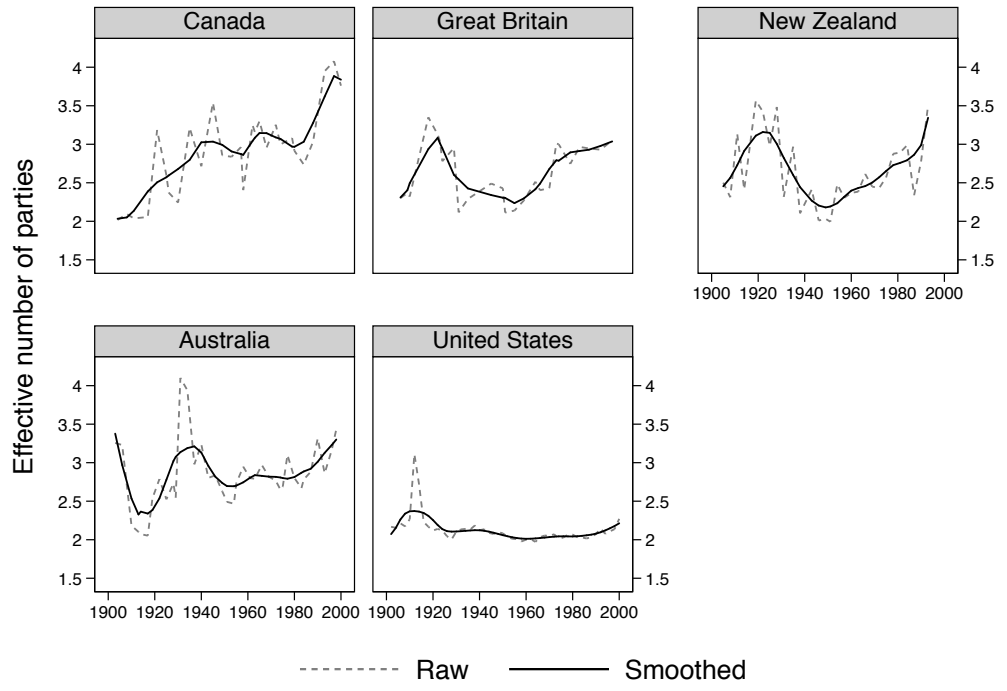

FIGURE 2 Effective number of electoral parties in the 20th century: Anglo-American SMD systems

Note: Entries are ENP values (Laakso & Taagepera 1979), smoothed by loess, bw = 0.30. US entries are for the House of Representatives.

first preferences to be less consolidated than are the single non-transferable preferences elicited by FPP (Sawer 2004). So Australian first preferences ought, in principle, to set the Anglosphere's upper bound for fragmentation.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Canadian system was the *least* fragmented. Values for the US peaked in the 1910s and for New Zealand and Britain in the 1920s. In Canada, fractionalization came later but when it came it endured. From the 1930s to the 1980s, the Canadian system harboured nearly one extra "equivalent" party relative to its early years and (until the 1970s) relative

to Britain and New Zealand. From a Duvergerian point of view, the US, Britain, and New Zealand were well behaved and Canada was the deviant case. Canada's deviance is all the more striking when Australia is brought into the comparison. In the first two decades of the 20th century the disparate pre-1901 party systems of the formerly separate Australian colonies were swiftly consolidated.[3] If the contrast between Australia, on one hand, and the US, New Zealand, and Britain, on the other, is easily interpretable in Duvergerian terms, the contrast with Canada is not. In this period, notwithstanding Canada's persistence in FPP, the Canadian system became not just more fractionalized than its FPP comparators but more fractionalized than Australia with its weaker electoral formula.[4]

The divergence was very wide from the 1940s to the 1960s. This is the moment caught by Rae (1969), who observed that Canadian multipartism was the result of sectionally-differentiated competition. This theme was reiterated by Riker (1976), who pronounced that Canadian multipartism posed no great challenge to Duverger's Law, in contrast to India's, which truly did. I return to the Canada-India comparison below. Riker's intuition (elaborated in Riker 1982) set the stage for Cox (1997), who set in stone the claim that Duverger's Law must pertain solely to competition at the district level. At that level, the Law is now formulated to state that the target number of parties is $M+1$, where M is the district magnitude. As the plurality formula is now almost always associated with $M = 1$, bipartisan is the predicted district outcome. Coordination across locales requires a different logic, which reflects the increased centrality of the national policy agenda, on the logic of Cox (1987). Chhibber and Kollman (2004) close the circle by running the national agenda logic in reverse, arguing that as the national government's role shrinks, so does the imperative to coordinate party labels across geographic units.[5] On this account, competition at the district level, and probably province-wide, should feature two parties only. Canada-wide ENP values greater than two should reflect mainly differences across locales in the identity of the two locally dominant parties.

Fractionalization II: digging into the Canadian case

The argument is elegant but not supported by a close reading of the case. Chhibber and Kollman supply no more than half the explanation of Canada's total fractionalization and divert attention

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[3] Probably assisted by the fact that before 1919, Australia used FPP.

[4] Canada was not the extreme case among FPP systems. The Indian electorate was even more fractionalized than Canada's. When Canada's ENP averaged about 3, India's averaged about 4. The gap closed considerably in the early 1990s but widened again in the late 1990s and widened further with Canada's 21st-century consolidation evident in Figure 3.

[5] Chhibber and Kollman arguably supply a mechanism that helps explains Gerring's (2005) finding that a strong federation such as Canada is worth about 15 percentage points in total third-party share, quite apart from other forces in play. From a pure two-party baseline, the emergence of a third party of this size, discounting the other two parties equally, would add 0.6 "effective" parties to the system. Awkwardly, the US system has been largely impervious to fractionalization.

from many features of the pattern that are either not explained by the neo-Duvergerian synthesis or are outright counter-indicated by it. The peculiarity of the case is fully revealed in Figure 3. Three plots appear, one for overall ENP and one each for the local and extra-local components. The overall component is basically raw plot from Figure 3, this time extended from 1878 to the present. The local component is the average ENP within constituencies and the extra-local component—the indicator of sectional breakdown—is the difference between the total and the local ENP. The logic

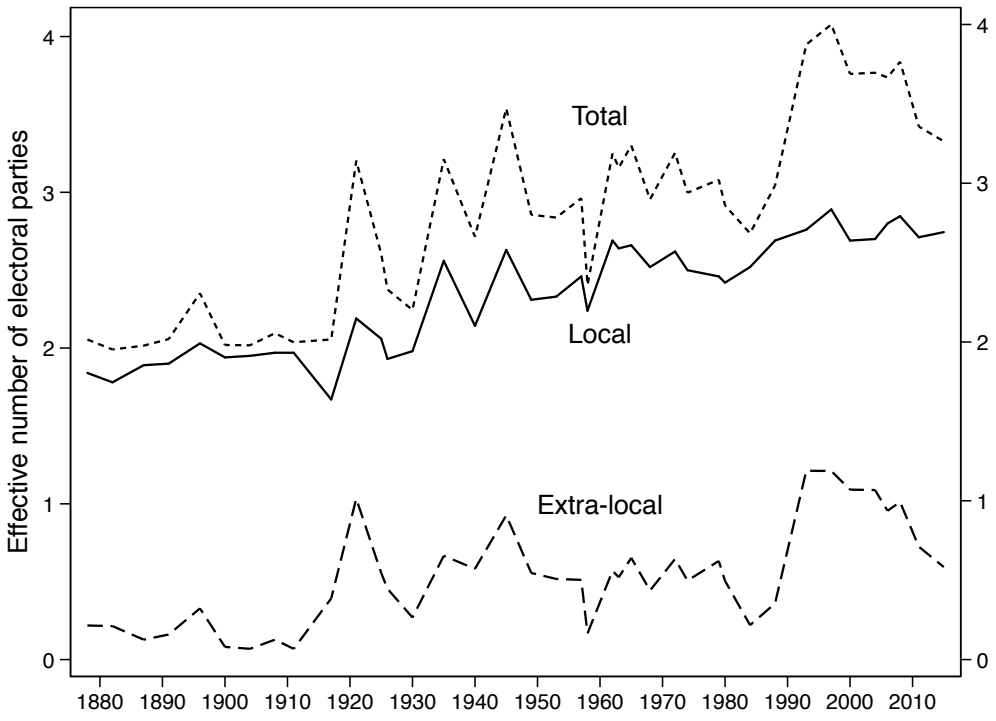

FIGURE 3 Components of electoral fractionalization

Note: "Local" is the average ENP at the electoral district level; "extra-local" is the difference between "total" and "local."

of this figure originates with Cox (1997) and Chhibber and Kollman (2004).

Extra-local fragmentation is the component that Chhibber and Kollman (2004) emphasize, and it unquestionably supplies the fireworks. It erupts in bursts, an anticipatory breakthrough in 1921, a spasm in 1945, and persisting lifts of roughly 0.5 "effective" parties in each of 1935 and 1993. So sectional differences in party competition helped turn a canonical two-party battle into the ENP equivalent of a three-party one. And Figure 1 reminds us that the actual number of enduring new small parties after 1935 was two. In later years the scene featured three "new" parties.

But there's the rub. The the total ENP gain from the 1910s to the 1990s was not 1.0 units but more

like 2.0. Which is to say that extra-local breakdown got the system only half way there. The other half came from deconsolidation of the vote *within* districts. After 1921, local values began a secular climb, from 1.9 before 1921 to 2.4 in 1930s-40s-50s, to 2.6 in the 1960s-70s, to 2.7 since 1980. The typical riding has come to feature something like *three*-party competition.[6]

In principle, an ENP number like this could be produced by many very small parties, none well positioned to affect the contest between the frontrunners (Dunleavy and Boucek 2003). Alternatively, there could be what Cox calls a non-Duvergerian equilibrium, where three contestants are just too close for voters or elites to discern which pair is strategically privileged. In fact, neither of these patterns prevails, as Figure 4 reveals. The figure concentrates on the three-way contests of greatest interest, among Liberals, Conservatives, and New Democrats. It concentrates on ridings

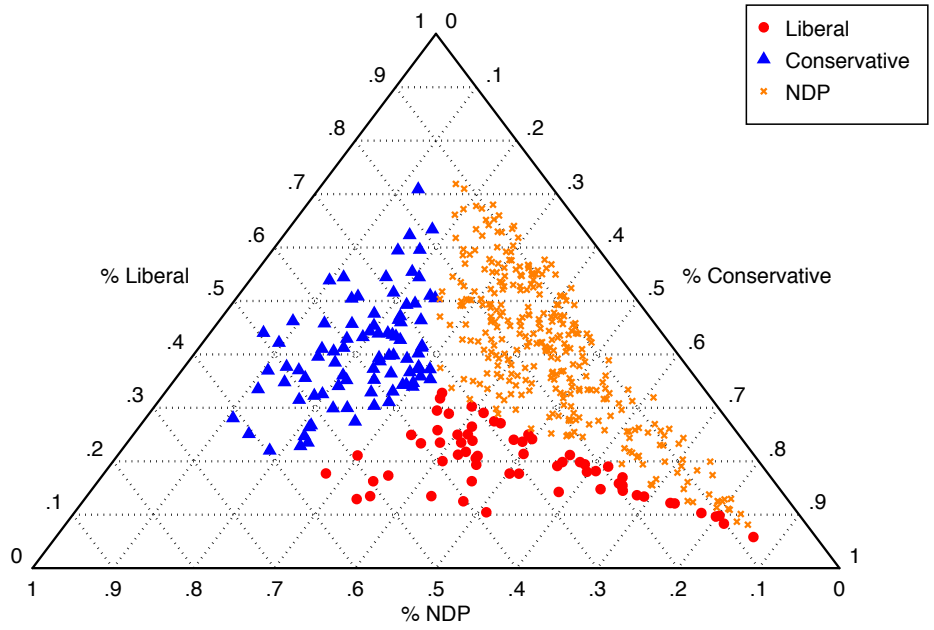

FIGURE 4 Three-way vote divisions, 2004–2006

Note: Quebec ridings excluded. Data points denote share of the total district vote won by the third-place finisher. Denominator is combined Liberal, Conservative, & NDP share. 2004-6 combined.
Sources: Canada. Chief Electoral Officer. Reports on General Elections, both years.

[6] To be clear, Chhibber and Coleman do deny the facts about local fractionalization. See in particular their chapter 2. Emphasis shifts to the weaker claim that the plurality formula exerts defractionalizing pressure, which they then take to mandate their emphasis in the rest of the book on cross-district co-ordination failure (see p.60).

outside Quebec, where this three-cornered pattern is the prevailing one.[7] Data come from the 2004 and 2006 elections, but the basics of the pattern have been recurring for decades. Each point is a three-dimensional coordinate in a space where the three parties' shares sum to 1.0. (All votes for any party other than these three are excluded from the denominator.) Points are separately labelled by the identity of the third-place party. By implication, the closer a point lies toward the centre of the equilateral triangle, the more equally divided the total must be, Cox's non-Duvergerian case. Conversely, the closer a point lies to the nearest axis, the less relevant that party's share is likely to be to the contest between first and second. In 30% percent of all non-Quebec districts the third place party receives more than 20 percent of the vote, and in 52 percent, that same party receives at least 15 percent of the vote. The typical third-place party in the 15-plus region gets just over 20% of the vote, where the first runner-up typically gets 30% and the winner, 44%. The picture is not very different for the 20-plus region: third place typically means a 22% share, second place 30% (again), and first place 42%. In only a tiny handful of districts is does third-place party approach or exceed 30%, where no strategic privilege can be identified. In sum, many third-place candidates have shares large enough to cover the margin between the frontrunners without being in serious contention themselves.

The primary force in local fractionalization was the universalization of contestation by three parties that all accepted the basic logic of Westminster parliamentarism. They acted as if the object of the exercise was to form a government. Compromise with electoral reality might be useful in the short run, but the ultimate objective is the big one and this requires acting like a big party. Figure 5 shows that for the two old parties universal contestation was mostly accomplished by the turn of the twentieth century. Both retreated somewhat in the 1910s and 1920s. The 1917 election elicited French/English and Protestant/Catholic divides over conscription for overseas military service so wide that the parties declined to offer candidates in hopeless places. Echoes of this continued into the 1920s, augmented by Liberal manoeuvring around the Progressive candidacies (which produced most of the local peak in the "insurgent" line in Figure 1). The 1945 election repeated some of the logic of 1917, with the Conservatives again declining to contest almost 20 percent of seats. By 1960, however, both old parties were contesting almost all seats.

Even as this was happening, the CCF-NDP was also moving to running candidates everywhere. In its founding decade, the 1930s, the party contested fewer than half the seats. The party appeared on the verge of a breakthrough in the run-up to the 1945 election, so candidates appeared in more than 80 percent of all seats. The disappointment of that year produced a retreat in 1949 and after. The transformation of the CCF into the NDP led to nearly universal candidacies for that party as well.

The universalization of contestation produced nationalization of the electorate, but only partially and not ineluctably. This is the lesson of Figure 6, which plots the standard deviation of party shares

[7] Although the NDP became a serious contestant in Quebec in 2011, the pattern for 2004 and 2006 is consistent with the pattern for the preceding century.

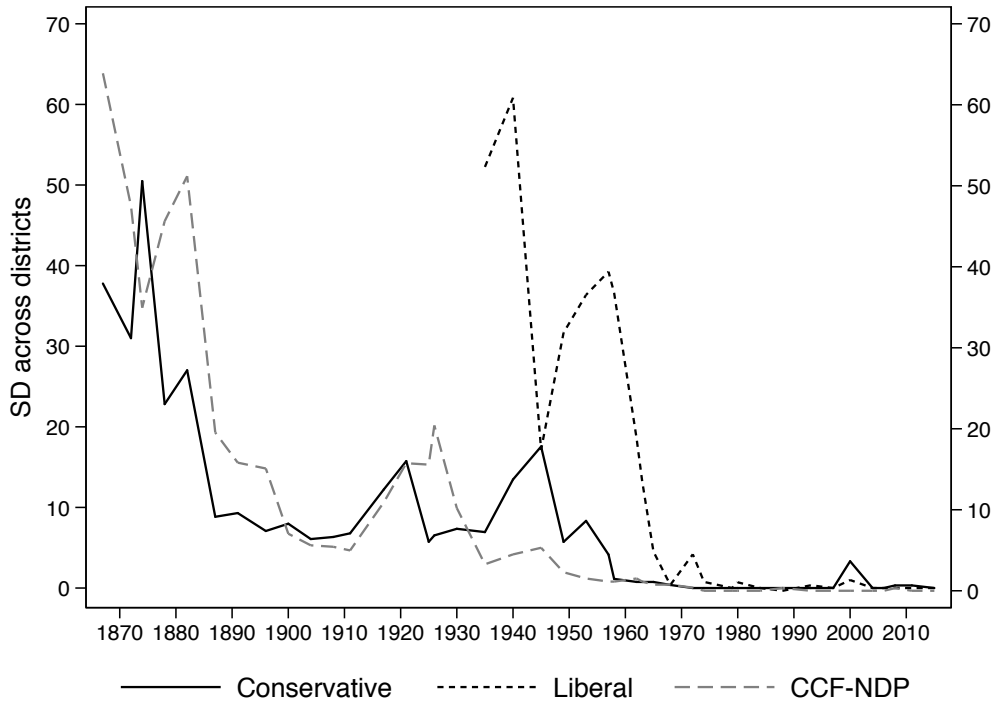

FIGURE 5 Uncontested seats, core parties

Note: for classification of candidacies, see note 1.

across constituencies for the three core parties. For all three, the trend is downward. The shifts before 1911 were accomplished in spite of the fact that the electorate was undergoing a dramatic westward expansion, with the rapid peopling of four new provinces. Some of the flux reflects change in parties' sizes, as the Liberal and Conservative parties were on average rather smaller after 1921 than before. The low values for the Conservatives in the 1990s reflect the party's abject weakness, reversed in the 2000s with a concomitant lift in SD values. All along, the CCF-NDP line usually lies below the others, as the party was the smallest of three. These artifacts aside, the trends mainly reflect substantive processes of geographic spread.

But the downward trends are broken by more than just ordinary short-term flux. The spike in 1917 was the result of a breakdown in the system's ability to integrate all sections of the electorate, as mentioned in the discussion of Figure 4. Later spikes also tended to reflect communal tension. And no real trend appears after 1960.

Duverger and the politics of class

Why do parties and voters conspire against the neo-Duvergerian synthesis? One issue is the time horizon. The modelling that produces predictions for consolidation prioritizes the electoral moment.

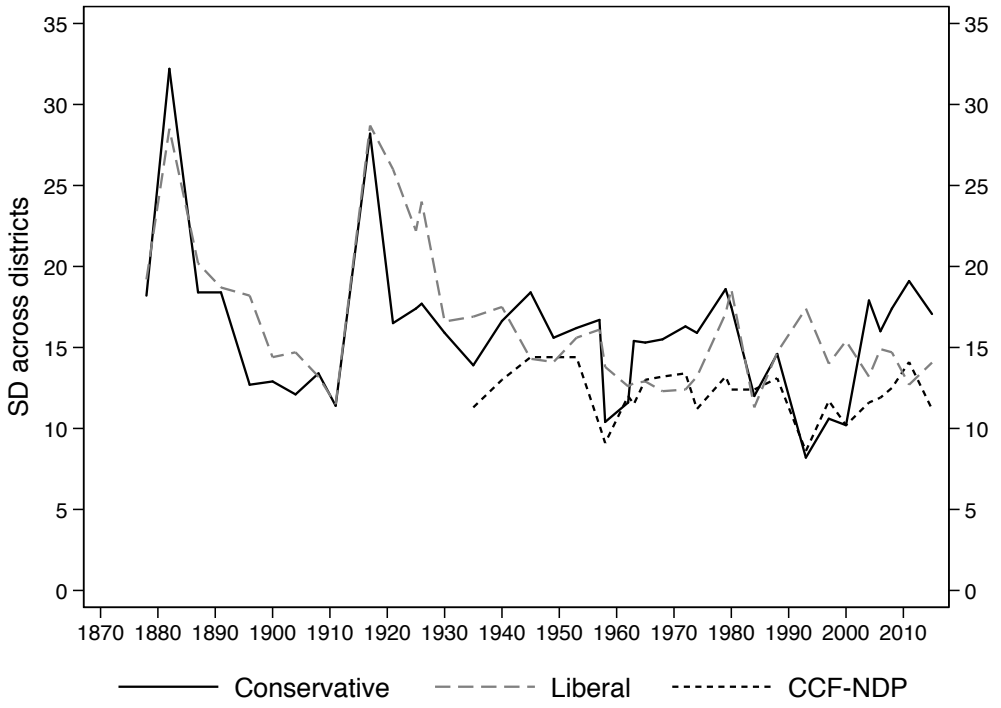

FIGURE 6 Nationalization of electoral forces, core parties

Note: for classification of candidacies, see note 1.

Studies of parties as organizations, in contrast, indicate that long-term considerations are routinely in play, whether it be maintenance of organizational integrity (Panebianco 1988) or a complex strategic interplay between existing parties and potential entrants (Hug 2001). The long term may be especially important for parties that directly represent subsisting entities in civil society, for example, Catholic parties or parties linked to organized labour. In Duverger's own articulation of the Law, the threat is from the left and the response is on the right.

The timing of fractionalization and defractionalization in Figure 2 is consistent with a reading that emphasizes invasion on the left. In New Zealand and Britain the emergence of a Labour party as a serious force after the Great War initially fractionalized the vote, but this in turn induced rivals on the centre-right to jockey for strategic advantage and ultimately to consolidate into a single party of the moderate right. In Australia as in Britain and New Zealand, the advent of the Labor party in the 1910s induced a crisis, with the attendant fractionalization/defractionalization sequence. Instead of consolidation this induced a shift to the Alternative Vote (AV), to minimize the costs of coordination failure. (The second Australian peak, in the 1930s, reflects temporary factional rivalry

on the Labor side.) When the Australian system settled down in the 1940s, its ENP was 2.8, reflecting the fact that AV is indulgent of first-preference support for small parties. The US is the exception that proves this rule. Even in that country, the waters were roiled by left politics early in the century, witness the ENP surge in Figure 2. The US response involved not displacement but cooptation, as the Democrats pivoted to a class basis and a privileged relationship with organized labour (Hirano and Snyder (2007).[8]

The Canadian case replicates the displacement logic. The difference is that the time scale is slow and the party on the left has been anemic, as Figure 1 shows. Various leftist micro-parties were pulled together with cooperatives and socialist intellectuals as the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation in 1932. Almost immediately the party began morphing into a mainstream party of labour, but the process was inhibited by a number of factors. Union density was low by comparative standards and started to grow only with World War II. The union movement was divided along lines exactly parallel to those in the US (partly reflecting the predominance of international unions) and unity was achieved only in 1956, after the US movement coalesced. Communist domination of certain unions also inhibited links with the social democratic CCF. Only in 1961, was the link formalized, with the transformation of the CCF into the New Democratic Party (NDP). Cultural resistance to a labour party was also stronger in Canada than elsewhere in the Anglosphere. The Catholic share of the population has always been greater than 40 percent and follows a rough East-West gradient with Quebec as notable peak. The Church, especially in Quebec, anathematized the new party. Gradually these barriers washed away even as union density grew dramatically. Although the unions never matched the peak densities in Britain or the antipodes, they did surpass the density in the US. As I write, Canada has the highest union density in the English-speaking world. And yet, the CCF-NDP did not keep pace.

By the time labour got moving as a political force, the old parties may have had time either to preempt a labour agenda or coopt it, as argued by Boix (2009). The policy record hints at cooptation efforts, especially in recent years and especially by the Liberal party. But the earlier record in most provinces and the current record in some (notably British Columbia) suggests that the Liberal party is not a natural partner for labour, arguably less of one than the US Democrats. And the fact that the NDP does exist—and no longer as a fringe party—means that there is a more congenial partner in the field. The NDP's early breakthrough was sufficiently concentrated in the West to give the party an electoral stronghold of sorts, consistent with the logic in Chhibber and Kollman (2004). The party's further growth has been quite uniform, as Figures 5 and 6 suggest. Cooptation does not seem to be the story, then.

Preemption is the better bet. I argue (Johnston 2008) that Quebec, the second largest province, was the pivot for government for more than a century. The vote in the province was both remarkably

[8] Hirano and Snyder explicitly contrast the class story with the neo-Duvergerian nationalization story of Chhibber and Kollman.

consolidated and remarkably mobile. If a party could extract 80 percent or more of the seats in Quebec, this alone would put them half way to a Canada-wide majority. This was usually enough to deliver victory, if not always with an outright majority. Almost always, one party succeeded in this and almost always this was the Liberal party. The pattern in Figure 1 of mostly gradual decay in the Liberal share was essentially the product of forces *outside* Quebec. And that decay was mostly attributable to the rise of the CCF-NDP (Johnston 2013). Growth of the NDP, in short, produced a stand-off rather than total displacement. The stand-off favoured the Liberals because they were able to reduce the weight of a class- or labour-based agenda by priming a cultural one.

The persistence of the old parties in this stand-off explains the general extent of local deconsolidation. The growth of the NDP and decline of the Liberals explains the upward trend. The Conservative party could not plausibly argue to some Liberal supporters that defection was necessary to block the NDP. The NDP was never strong enough (not before 2011, in any case) for this argument to be credible. Occasionally, the Conservatives were strong enough that the Liberals could make the strategic pitch to NDP supporters, but mostly this was unnecessary. A pitch by the Conservative party to NDP supporters was essentially implausible; the parties are ideologically disconnected.[9]

Critical to the preemption story is the proposition that voters incorporate *extra*-local strategic evidence into their calculus. Why otherwise would someone in a province where the Liberal party is weak nonetheless give that party the time of day? To substantiate the proposition, I deploy data from provincial elections as counterfactuals for federal ones. The evidence is in Figures 7 and 8. In each figure, the vertical axis is the ENP for the province, once for the province as part of the federal electorate and once for its own provincial elections. In Figure 7, the focus is on the CCF-NDP, on one hand, and insurgents, on the other, as sources of fractionalization. This seems reasonable as these are the invaders, threatening to disrupt a settled two-party pattern. The insurgent share defines the x-axis and the CCF-NDP share is presented as the conditioning factor, with three representative NDP shares, zero, 20 percent, and 40 percent.[10] Although the logic is similar between the arenas, an essential point is that the NDP constitutes more of a threat in provincial than in federal elections. This is for two reasons. First, where the NDP has been historically strong, it is stronger still in the provincial arena, and thus more of a threat in some general sense (Johnston 2013). Second, in a provincial arena the NDP threat is to form the government; in the federal arena, although the party aspires to grow, its strength in a given province does not necessarily threaten the Canada-wide

[9] In the earlier years, CCF-NDP supporters were often quite like Conservatives on a cultural dimension. Conservative surges—and insurgent surges with conservative cultural content—could draw support from the CCF-NDP base. NDP supporters have become more like Liberal ones on cultural questions, however, and vote exchange directly between these flanking parties are now quite rare.

[10] The estimations underlying the figure are time-series cross-section regressions with fixed effects and both the insurgent and NDP shares entered as quadratics. The curvilinearity incorporates the bounded logic of the ENP calculation.

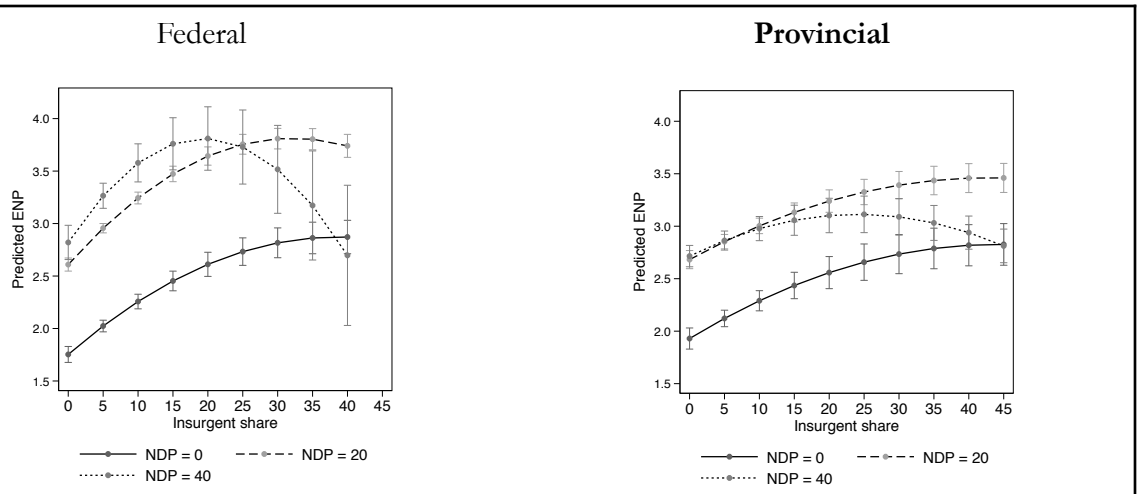

FIGURE 7 Differential Fractionalization by Arena

Note: For underlying estimation see note 10. Plot in federal panel cut off at 40 because of large confidence intervals above that threshold.

hegemony of the old parties.

In both arenas, insurgent and CCF-NDP shares each have a diminishing marginal effect on ENP, as is arithmetically required. But the increment for each is smaller provincially than federally. Indeed, where the NDP share is 40 percent the ENP is generally *lower* than when the NDP sits at 20 percent. And when the NDP is at 40 percent, growth in the insurgent share adds nothing to ENP. In that context, insurgent growth drives the old parties off the field. The federal pattern echoes the provincial one, but over the most relevant range, the federal arena is more accommodating of the NDP.

Figure 7 captures the essence of elections in Western Canada, especially provincial ones. First, the West is where the CCF-NDP has had its historically greatest impact, and that impact has been stronger provincially than federally. The NDP has governed in each of the four Western provinces, in some cases for extended periods. Second, the alternative to the CCF-NDP has varied across provinces and over time. At the time of writing, in Manitoba the alternative is the Conservative party, in Saskatchewan the alternative is a party named after the province, and in British Columbia the alternative is the Liberal party. Only in Alberta is the opposition significantly divided. This probably reflects the fact that the NDP has only just gained power. A battle for the soul of the province's political right is underway right now. The three provinces with settled arrangements reproduce the history of Britain (Conservatives vs Labour), New Zealand (National vs Labour), and Australia (Liberal vs Labor) with eerie precision. These cases in turn exemplify *grosso modo* the history of 20th-century party systems: a labour-social democratic left that is broadly the same everywhere polarized against a right that is either a composite of historically-specific tendencies or a consolidated result of a sequential equilibrium struggle with strong path dependence.

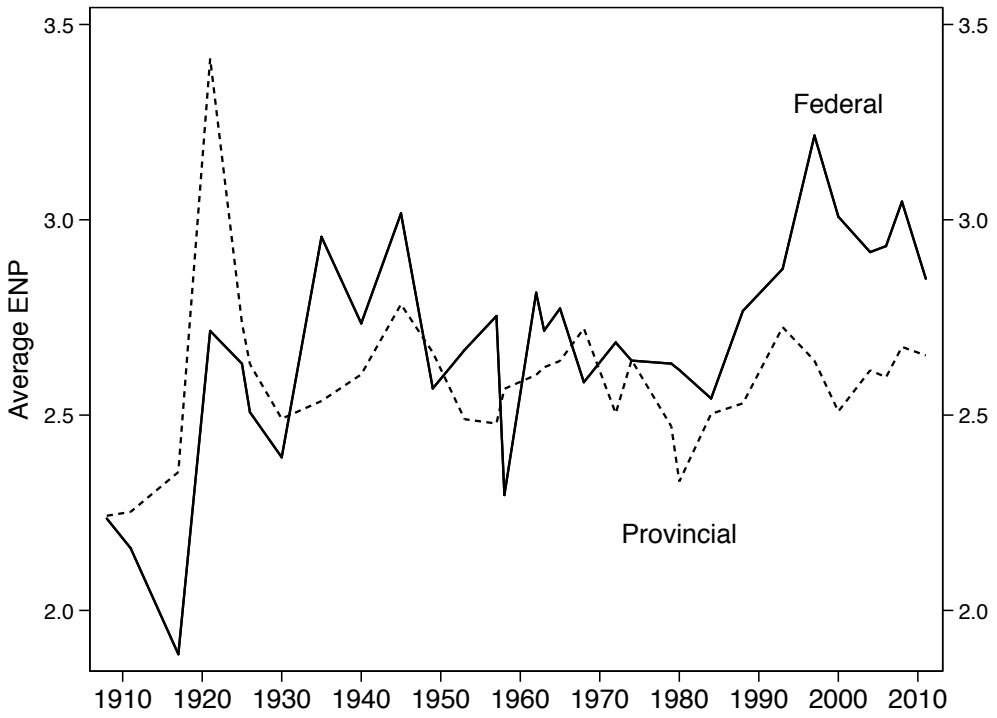

FIGURE 8 Differential Fractionalization by Arena

Note: Entries are average province-specific ENP for federal election and for temporally closest provincial election.

Further to the point is the evidence in Figure 8. Here the dependent variable, ENP, is averaged across all provinces by arena. The average masks variation across provinces in both arenas. The general point, however, is that Duvergerian processes of some form hold sway in the provincial arena. In the first crisis, immediately after the Great War, provincial systems registered the stress more than the federal one did. By 1930, provincial systems reconsolidated, although not completely. Critically, there has been no further trend. This lack of trend coexists with growth in the NDP share everywhere but especially in Western provincial politics. There the NDP share hovers around or above 40 percent, well into the range in Figure 7 where increments in insurgent voting induce *no* net fractionalization. In federal elections, the system has broken down, and it has done so ubiquitously, as we already know from Figure 3. The difference, I argue, is that in the provincial arena, provinces are entities unto themselves. If the NDP looks the same province-after-province, this because the NDP is like social democratic and labour parties elsewhere, cut from the same cloth, as it were. This is an organizational explanation, and not an electoral one. The rest of the system in any given province need not pay any heed to the rest of the country except, as with the NDP, there is an organizational imperative to do so. In federal elections, the same is not true. British Columbians may

be less moved by cultural politics than voters in Eastern Canada, but they are not utterly unmoved. Even if unmoved, some at least evidently ponder the implications of cultural politics for parties' feasibility.

Ebb and flow in sectional differences

It is true that the extra-local element is larger than it was a century ago. But the claim that its size corresponds to retreat in the importance attached to the national government does not hold water. More than that, the claim misses the real overall pattern, of episodic surge and decline. The key surges—1921, 1935, 1945, and 1993—came in moments of crisis in which Ottawa was a critical actor. The crises involve cultural divisions (sometimes induced by war), economic adversity, or both. In every case, the federal arena was the centre of the action.

And, sooner or later, extra-local values retreat. To see this, first set the extra-local plot before 1921 as the baseline for assessing post-1921 values. Four moments after 1921 bring extra-local values down to the pre-1921 level: 1930, 1958, 1984, and 1988. Whatever the mechanisms that produced them, each reversionary election returned a Conservative majority government, two of them as landslides. Between 1911 and 2011 only these elections returned such an outcome. In the 20th century, Conservative accession to majority status involved soaking up the sectional tension of the preceding years. Once every generation, a grand consolidation occurs, the effective number of parties shrinks, and the Liberals are chased from office. Superficially, this looks like Duvergerian equilibration, in that deconsolidated opposition forces overcome their differences and successfully coordinate. But if this is equilibration, it struggles against powerful disequilibrium dynamics, as Conservative hubris is always followed swiftly by nemesis: each Conservative majority in the 20th century collapsed spectacularly. When it did, sectionalism returned with a vengeance.

Critically for this paper's central argument, this consolidation dynamic occurs at the "wrong" level. Through all this history, local fragmentation continues to grow, or at least does not retreat much.[11] Instead drops in the system's overall fragmentation come about through integration across regions. This was true in 20th-century moments of Conservative victories. It is also true of the remarkable stitching up the national party system since 1993. Recall that in 1993, the system gained there equivalent of 0.5 extra parties mostly as a result of sectional breakdown. The key episodes were the split on the right with the arrival of the Reform party and the emergence of the Bloc Québécois. The elections since cut the extra-local component in half, such that is has returned to the scale of the 1970s. Whatever the exact calculus that underlies the shift, it cannot be an essentially local phenomenon. There has been *no* net decrease in the average ENP within districts.

[11] From the 1920s to the 1940s, local fractionalization did move in sequence with the extra-local component, although all along riding an upward trend. After 1945, the local trend became much smoother.

Discussion

The expectation that governments will comprise one party forces parties seeking to govern to run candidates everywhere, to create the appearance (and, with luck, the reality) of country-wide credibility. Running candidates everywhere militates against electoral cooperation in single-member districts. Mutually competitive relations within each district make post-election coalition-building in parliament very difficult, and so the circle is closed.[12] Any party that wants to enjoy power must, then, seek a multi-region electoral base. But historically these regions always included Quebec, and the propensity of Quebec voters to coordinate on the single acceptable alternative party warped competition in the rest of the country. The Liberal party almost always won and the Conservatives could beat the Liberals only by assembling an extraordinarily inclusive coalition.

Liberal longevity rested not on indulging Quebec nationalism but on striking centrist bargains. The Liberals thus positioned themselves at the centre on the system's "national" dimension. On this dimension when the Conservative party drew Quebec votes they came from the nationalist end of the spectrum. They were then wedded to the Conservatives' anti-Quebec base outside the province. The incoherence of the resultant coalition accounts for both the dramatic drops in the system's extra-local component and for the shortness of the interludes.

Liberal strength in Quebec also cashed out in that other Canadian peculiarity, the continuing strength of a party of the centre. And it is this centrism that frustrates attempts to consolidate the district-level vote of the other parties.[13] In this Canada exemplifies the pattern that Riker (1976) ascribes to India. When he wrote, the Indian system was indeed dominated by a centrist Congress party and opposition unity was unimaginable. Since then, Congress has moved left and now, if not then, its successor on the conceptual landscape is the Canadian Liberal party. All of this suggests that emphasis on the local element in politics may be misplaced.

Even if Canada's history is somewhat *sui generis*, it is important in the negative for understanding the trajectories of the others. It points to unacknowledged conditions that sustain Duvergerian-style two-party politics, in particular a high degree of cultural homogeneity—or at least suppression of functional equivalents of Canada's national question. And it may now be an example in the positive. New Zealand may have got out from under FPP just in time, and the Canadian case may help us understand the unravelling of its system. The same may be true for Britain, which increasingly looks like Canada: riven by sectionalism, a fractionalized electorate, and a coalition experience that compromised the future of one of the partners.

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[12] There are isolated instances of cross-party coalitions in Canada but without exception each coalition led to the extinction of one or both participants. The federal example is the 1917 Unionist coalition, which all but destroyed the Conservative party in Quebec and seriously compromised the Liberal party in the West.

[13] Conservative and NDP strategists recognize the need to bring the Liberals down and sometimes conspire to this end, but cooperation never extends to mutual withdrawal of candidates or to any form of coalition.

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